



**Dear Committee Members,**

**The Minnesota Horsemen's Benevolence and Protection Association (MNHBPA) appreciates the opportunity to address you on behalf of the thousands of individuals who participate in Minnesota Thoroughbred racing.**

**We could write about the 5,600 jobs that are related to our sport. We could write about the substantial financial impact our sport has on the State of Minnesota, edging toward a half-billion dollars. And we could write about the immensely positive reach Minnesota Thoroughbred racing has around the world, as our state is showcased in scores of countries every day there is racing.**

**But what we want to write about is our culture. In Minnesota, there is a unique and generous story to tell about the culture of horse racing and our support for our racing community. In the 40 years since Minnesota voters approved parimutuel betting on horse racing, we know we have embraced the trust that voters placed in us.**

**Unlike other states with Thoroughbred racing, our industry in Minnesota is being restricted in expanding its co-core business: gaming. The result is that racing in many other states will continue to offer substantially higher purses and incentives than we do. And yet, even with the lack of gaming opportunities, the culture of Minnesota racing has punched well above its weight.**

**Nowhere is this better evidenced than the stable area at Canterbury Park. It is a community unto itself, filled with hundreds of people from diverse backgrounds who live and work there in housing provided for free by Canterbury Park. First generation Americans. Individuals with work visas. Second, third and fourth generation horsepersons. People who have found their calling in the Minnesota horse racing industry, regardless of their levels of education.**

**Purses are the fuel that powers benevolence programs that are vital to our workforce. Many children and teens, with their parents working in Thoroughbred racing, must travel to different states at least twice a year. Learning can be challenging enough without having to be uprooted. There is the exceptional education program for children and teens, which offers courses, individual tutoring, guest speakers who talk about their professions, field trips to museums, libraries, and distance learning. Distance learning also directly addresses this challenge.**

**English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) courses are offered to adults and are nothing less than essential for those immigrants wanting to make a good life for themselves and for**

**their families in their adoptive country. We have seen withdrawn, depressed people learn English via ESL and their lives are transformed.**

**To provide supports for mental and emotional health, the stable area at Canterbury Park hosts Abijah's on the Backside. It is an equine-based psychotherapy program, especially well-suited for PTSD and addiction. Our horse people, plus individuals from the military, law enforcement and fire departments have successfully utilized this unique and proven therapy. The horses that are used at Abijah's are retired racehorses. Extraordinary beings helping other extraordinary beings.**

**An all-encompassing non-denominational ministry program offers:**

- **Weekly chapel services, ongoing nutrition, and food assistance.**
- **A women's group that provides guidance and support.**
- **An array of activities for young families.**
- **Funds for healthcare and dental care.**

**All counseling services are provided free of charge by the MNHBPA.**

**Canterbury Park (and its stable area) is a special, giving place and has been for three decades. It is a uniquely Minnesotan success story – a diverse, self-reliant people helping their own as they support a thriving business producing substantial economic impact and jobs.**

***This is the culture of Thoroughbred racing in Minnesota.***

**The continued success of racing is dependent on providing opportunities for purses to grow, so Minnesota can continue to compete with other national tracks. As you continue your discussions on the bill to bring new forms of gaming to Minnesota, rest assure there are many economic and community development benefits that come from Minnesota's approach – vibrant tribal casinos, two successful racetracks and community-driven charitable gaming.**

**We ask that you take steps to support horse racing and its many economic and social benefits.**

**Sincerely,**

**Mike Cronin**

**Executive Director**

**On behalf of the members of the Minnesota Horsepersons Benevolent & Protective Association (MNHBPA)**